

Open Letter to Church Board

Date: November 14, 2013

To: Church Board: Sara Simons, Chairman
Don Whitley, Secretary
Barb Scantlin, Elder Chair
Oaks Christian Church
1216 Bethlehem St
Houston, Texas 77018-1918

Katie Spencer, V. Chair
Dorene Drake, Treasurer
Pat Whitley, Deacons

From: Charlie Dean, church member

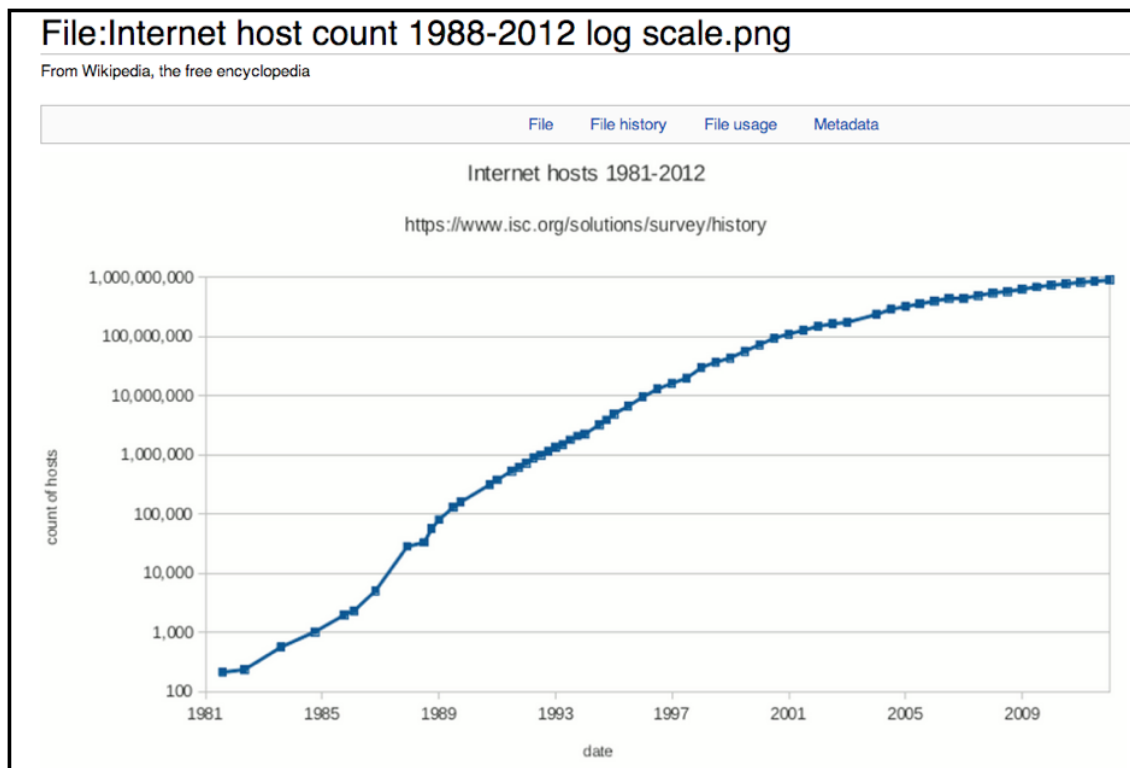
Ladies and Gentlemen:

The Library Express

This is a continuation of my discussion of an auxiliary group. I will refer to this as the Library Express (the e-Library Express, the Library, etc.). I mentioned this in my letters of September 24 and October 16, 2013. The Library Express will help us target Young Adults. Young Adults receive and exchange information through the Internet. As Information Technology advances, this Church's ability to attract Young Adults diminishes.

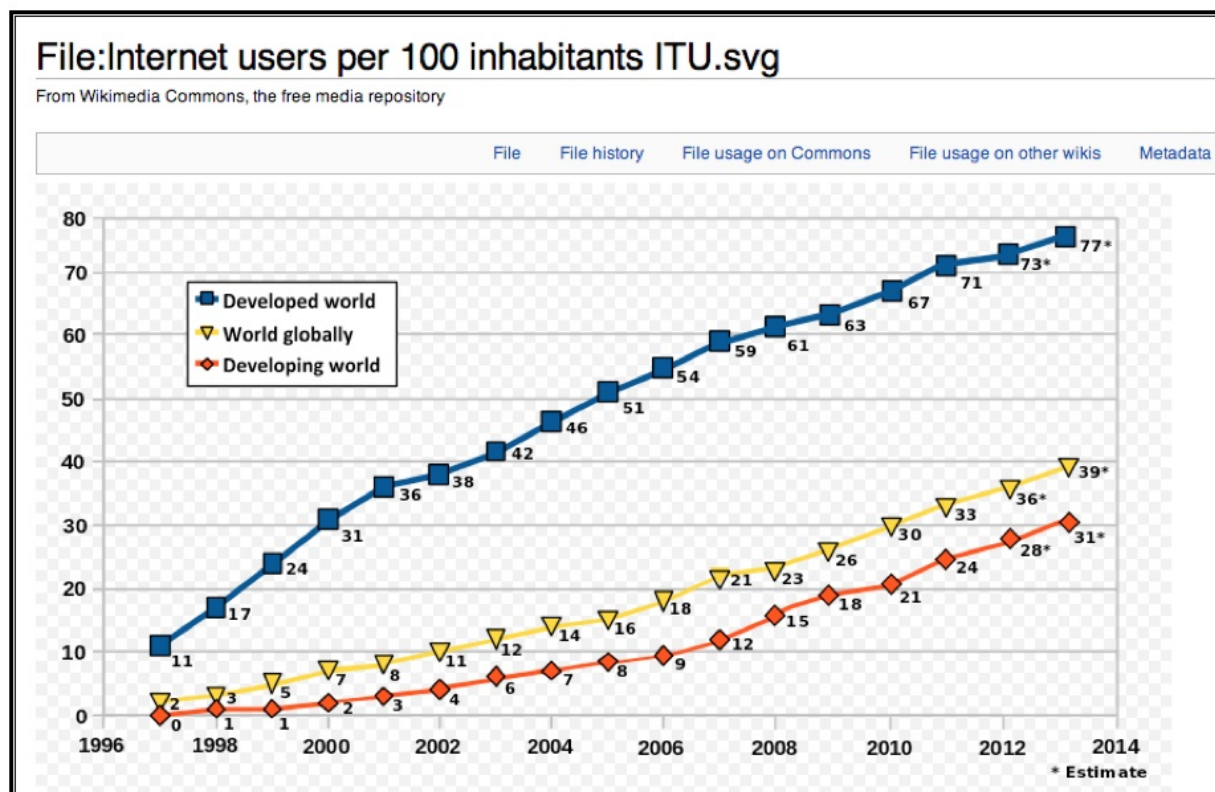
Why We Need Library Express

The chart (below) shows how the **number of Internets hosts** increased from 1981 through 2012. A "host" is a computer containing data or programs that another computer can access by means of a network or modem. (<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/host>) Pick whatever year you think the membership of OCC began to drop. You should notice a negative correlation between the church membership and the increase in the number of Internets hosts.



(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Internet)

The next chart (below) shows the number of **Internet users per 100 people**. In about 2013 there were 77 Internet users for each 100 people (in the “Developed world”). You should also notice the same sort of negative correlation here.



(http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Internet_users_per_100_inhabitants_ITU.svg)

Attracting Young Adults to OCC will require a change. This is not an ecclesiastical matter. It is purely pragmatic. The same principles apply whether you are running a church, a country club, or a Boy Scout troop.

As I review our Constitution and Bylaws I see areas where **Information Technology** is needed to better fulfill our purpose.

- CONSTITUTION, PREAMBLE states that we are “**a congregationally governed body**.” We can hardly fit the bill when the corporate records have for decades been, for all practical purposes, unavailable to the general congregation.
- CONSTITUTION, ARTICLE II: COVENANT mentions “**Our purpose ... is ... service ...**” I hope more of this will happen in our community. The Library Express will help.
- BY-LAWS, ARTICLE II, OFFICERS, B,4 mentions “**promoting the growth ... of the church.**” This church is suffering from negative growth. The Library Express will help.
- The word “**community**” is mentioned five (5) times throughout our BY-LAWS. Public libraries consider their community to be a five-mile radius around the library. Information Technology will help us better serve our community.
- BY-LAWS, ARTICLE V: MINISTRY TEAMS, C,5 mentions “**... obtaining adequate publicity for ... Church programs, social activities ... and efforts ... to serve the entire community.**” Using Information Technology will help here.

- BY-LAWS, ARTICLE V: MINISTRY TEAMS, G,3 mentions “... **orientation and assimilation of new members into the life and fellowship of the Church.**” I am a relatively new member, and I believe I should have been given the Constitution and Bylaws and other informative material soon after I joined. Clearly Information Technology could help here.
- The letter group “**educat**” is mentioned eleven times on our BY-LAWS. Information Technology will help OCC provide data and information to its members and others in a timely manner.

Backdrop of e-Library Express

The backdrop of e-Library Express is a lack of Young Adults (ages 19 – 30) participating on a regular basis at OCC. The present demographic mix is indicative of a grim future for OCC. We may not be able to overcome this, absent some very novel ideas and plans.

Part of e-Library Express’s mission is efficient management of information, making all nonexempt material easily accessible, while protecting personal information. It also encompasses the concept of user confidentiality; this means the user can access the material without getting permission or having anyone know that he accessed it.

Our excuse for not engaging in **best practices of information technology** seems to be that we have few OCC members who are computer literate enough to benefit from it. This is shortsighted. Any suggestion of doing things better should be eagerly accepted, especially if it cost nothing.

I do not want to belabor the point but, as I peruse our Constitution and Bylaws, I see that we clearly need to use Information Technology more efficiently. Our environment has drastically changed. Technology is here whether we like it or not. How we choose to use it will determine OCC’s future. We must engineer our own solutions. I do not believe we can delegate or spend our way out of this.

OCC has a place for a Sunday school class of at least ten Young Adults, and we should do whatever it takes to achieve this.

Please make this part of your pubic agenda.
